

## Storytelling: logline and film synopsis

**Perfume: The Story of a Murderer** 2006 written by Andrew Birkin (screenplay) and Bernd Eichinger, based on the 1985 same-title novel by Patrick Süskind.

### Logline

18<sup>th</sup> century, France. JEAN-BAPTISTE GRENOUILLE is endowed with an exceptional olfactory sense. As an apprentice with master perfumers, he knows all of their secrets. However, his ultimate goal is to create the perfect fragrance, the one which bewitches. In his quest for ingredients, GRENOUILLE is irresistibly attracted by women's scent. He therefore starts to kill them to achieve his goal...

### Synopsis

#### ACT ONE

A dark day in the 18-th century, France. A man is sentenced to death for the murdering of 24 women. As the judge pronounces his sentence, the crowd is furious. The prisoner "shall be bound to a wooden cross with his face raised towards heaven" claims the judge. The name of the convicted is JEAN-BAPTISTE GRENOUILLE (Ben Whishaw).

Flashback on the life of Grenouille, beginning with his birth at a fish market in Paris on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 1783. Her mother delivers him under her fish stand and abandons him there. The baby is found and sent to the orphanage of Mme GAILLARD (Sian Thomas). The child is merely considered as a source of income and receives no affection. He grows as a strangely detached boy with a unique olfactory sense. By the age of 13, Mme Gaillard no longer has room for Jean-Baptiste. She therefore sells him to GRIMAL's tannery. "Slaved 16 hours a day, summer and winter, Grenouille adjusts to his new fate".

One day, as Jean-Baptiste makes his first delivery to the city, he comes across a whole new bunch of odours. He particularly gets obsessed by the scent of a girl selling plums (Karoline Herfurth). However, he accidentally kills her. Grenouille is terrified by his act. At this point in time, he understands the purpose of his miserable existence has a higher destiny: "he wants to learn how to preserve scent so that never again will he lose such sublime beauty".

#### END OF ACT ONE

#### ACT TWO

Grenouille succeeds in getting hired by GUISEPPE BALDINI (Dustin Hoffman), a famous perfumer in the capital. While Baldini takes advantage of his apprentice's ability to create fragrances, Jean-Baptiste discovers all the techniques and secrets concerning the manufacturing of perfumes. His talent allows him to elaborate several olfactory masterpieces. However, his obsession remains the natural scents of young women. He wishes to learn how to transform these scents into perfumes. As he realizes that he cannot extract every odour with the method of distillation, he becomes seriously depressed. Baldini therefore sends him to the city of Grasse, renowned for its expertise in the field of perfumery.

As he heads towards Grasse, Grenouille enjoys the delicious fragrances offered by the countryside. He discovers a place where no human odour can reach him. No longer distracted, he is therefore able to bask in his own existence. After a while, he almost forgets his plans and obsessions. His asylum, however, ends with the revelation that he has no smell of his own. He is greatly disturbed since this means that all his life he has been a nobody to everyone. To avoid sinking into oblivion he decides to prove his genius to the world; he will create an exceptional perfume.

Upon his arrival in town, Jean-Baptiste is intoxicated by the perfume of a young woman; he promises to capture it. By the time, he is hired by Mme ARNULFI (Corinna Harfouch) and DOMINIQUE DRUOT (Paul Berrondo) to assist them in their perfumery. He learns the method of enfleurage, which he secretly improves and uses to extract the essence of women. One day, the dead body of a young woman is discovered, followed by 23 others. All of them show the same marks: their bodies are naked and their heads shaved. The alarm is given; the population is in panic. ANTOINE RICHIS (Alan Rickman), a wealthy notable, cannot contain his anxiety; his daughter, LAURA RICHIS (Rachel Hurdwood), is certainly one of the most beautiful young women of the city. He foresees she will be the next victim. For her protection, Antoine flees Grasse. But Jean-Baptiste finds them easily and murders Laura in her sleep.

Now that he possesses all the necessary ingredients for the elaboration of his fragrance, Grenouille starts the harmonious melange. As he terminates and adds the final touch to his masterpiece, Laura's essence, soldiers arrest him. The Court sentences him to death.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

The day of his execution, Grenouille seems indifferent to his fate. All the citizens gather to celebrate the event. As guards guide him towards the scaffold, Jean-Baptiste applies a drop of his perfume over him. Suddenly the miracle happens: everyone claims his innocence. Bewitched, the crowd turns into a massive orgy. Even Richis, firstly sceptical, eventually embraces him as his son. Druot is instead accused for the murders and hanged. Pardoned, Grenouille escapes Grace and returns to Paris.

Back in the capital, Jean-Baptiste goes back to his place of birth, at the fish market. In the dark of the night, disenchanted by life, he pours the whole flask of his fragrance over him. People around immediately feel an unrestricted love for Grenouille. In trance, they physically devour him. When they finish, they are imbued with a glow of happiness: "for the first time in their lives, they believe[d] that they [have] done something purely out of love".